



Wisconsin E-Brief for Partnership Schools

December 2010

An e-newsletter from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Community Learning and Partnerships Team
to promote family-school-community partnerships for children's learning

News You Can Use

Just in time for the Holidays, these healthy lifestyle resources will help schools and families keep kids fit:

- **National PTA's Healthy Lifestyles: A Guide for Parents:**
http://www.pta.org/GSK_Parents_Guide_Booklet_disclaimer_added.pdf. Also in Spanish.
- The **PACK Program** (Pack Assorted Colors for Kids) encourages kids to eat more fruits and vegetables at home and school. Materials and activities for teachers, parents, and students are available at
<http://www.pbhfoundation.org/educators/teachers/activities/packweek/index.php>. Sponsored by the Produce for Better Health Foundation.
- **Nourish Healthy Kids Nutrition E-News** features nutrition education tools, tips, and recipes for families:
http://www.nourishinteractive.com/parents_area/healthy_family_nutrition_newsletter/healthy_holidays_tips_foods_family_nutrition.

Positive Partnership Practices

These ideas come from the Wisconsin DPI VISTA volunteers in schools, community sites, and public libraries around the state working to strengthen family-school-community partnerships. For more great ideas, read the VISTA newsletters at
<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/fscp/vnwsltrhm.html>

Host Community Coffees. Midvale Elementary School, Madison, invites parents to enjoy free coffee and bagels three mornings in November. Principal Teresa Carranza and other school staff brief parents on school programs, student progress, and learning-at-home tips from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m., also giving parents a chance to talk and get to know one another. This year, parents learned about the school's dual language immersion program, comprehensive literacy plan, family nights, and global garden project.

Parents "Get the Scoop" at Scoop Sessions. Parents in the Rhinelander School District were welcomed at 20 to 30-minute Scoop Sessions held at the end of the school day, just before students were dismissed. Sessions were held twice a month at three schools in the district and were presented by community members as well as school staff. Session topics were pulled directly from responses to a parent survey distributed earlier in the school year and included how to navigate the district website, the importance of eating together and how to generate good conversations at the table, child health and nutrition, and tips for reading together at home.

Save the Date!

The **Urban Family Engagement Conference** will be held on Tuesday, March 23, at the Milwaukee Hilton City Center. Conference planning committee members include DPI, Wisconsin PTA, Parents Plus, Wisconsin FACETS, WEAC, and urban school districts. For more information, contact Jane Grinde at DPI: jane.grinde@dpi.wi.gov or 608-266-9356.

Partnership Question of the Month

How can an Action Team help the school welcome families and develop trust and positive relationships with families?

Along with academic goals, Joyce Epstein, director of the National Network of Partnership Schools, advises schools to set an annual partnership-strengthening goal. School Action Teams that make targeted efforts to welcome, respect, and involve all students' families are more likely to have trusting relationships among families and staff that revolve around the well-being and learning of the child or young person. Read more from the DPI Partnership Action Team Toolkit at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/fscip/act-tm-q4.html>.

Partnership Resources

The **Achieving Excellence and Innovation in Family, School, and Community Engagement** webinar series is an opportunity for stakeholders representing national, regional, and local organizations to learn about family, school, and community, engagement research, best practices from the field, and new innovations that are making a difference in school improvement and student learning. Although all four webinars have already been aired, archives are available at http://www.nationalpirc.org/engagement_webinars/archives.html.

Parent Involvement in Action. Discover creative applications of research-based practices. Read about the innovative strategies other schools across the country have implemented to successfully engage parents in children's learning. <http://www.illinoisparents.org/toolbox/>.

Research for Results

A monthly focus on a timely topic of partnership research.

Culturally Responsive Schools Start by Listening to Parents

By 2020, children of color will constitute 46% of the public school population. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education has published an online booklet, **Culturally Responsive Parent Involvement: Concrete Understandings and Basic Strategies**, that explores culturally biased beliefs many educators frequently have toward students and their families. It also suggests a variety of simple, but often overlooked, ways that educators and parents of different cultures can work together to benefit students, including:

1. Clearly express the **school's commitment** to meaningful and culturally responsive parent involvement by writing a mission statement and setting goals.
2. Inventory **parents' concerns, perspectives, and ideas** to help the school know the cultural identity and characteristics of the community.
3. Plan a series of **parent-teacher seminars** or parent-teacher team-building activities based on survey/interview findings.

4. Assign a **family liaison** -- a senior teacher, a parent, a staff member, a group of people, or several different faculty members on a rotating schedule -- to make cultural responsiveness a priority.
5. Develop a **school cultural resources binder** so all staff know who in the school can translate what languages and what kinds of culturally responsive parental involvement practices have worked for teachers.
6. Create a **family space**—big or small—where families can meet, read, talk, and feel as if they belong.
7. Commit to at least **two activities** that staff -- as individuals or a group -- can involve parents in and inform them about schools. Activities may range from inviting parents on a field trip or to a student exhibition, to making personal phone calls or sending occasional letters home informing parents what students are learning and asking parents for their ideas to make learning culturally responsive.

The complete booklet is available at www.pacer.org/mpc/pdf/CulturallyResponsivePI.pdf

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NNPS Update

Web Conference for Schools

The National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) will conduct **TWO** Web Conferences for NNPS member schools on **January 12, 2011** at 3 pm and on **January 19, 2011** at 1 pm. Both conferences will cover the same material, so please register for only one of the dates. The focus of the 90-minute Web Conference is to address "NNPS Basics." Topics will include ten steps to partnership success, strengthening the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), and how to write an action plan for 2010-11. Registration fees are \$50.00 per site for one phone line. Contact Darcy Hutchins at dhutchins@csos.jhu.edu or 410-516-8893 to register.

Newsletter developed by DPI staff: **Ruth Anne Landsverk**, Partnerships Coordinator; **Jane Grinde**, Team Director; **Betsy Prueter**, Project Coordinator; **Kristine Nadolski** and **Becky Smith**, VISTA Leaders; and **Laura Paella**, Program Assistant.

The **Wisconsin E-Brief for Partnership Schools** is a monthly newsletter of news, events, research, and promising practices to keep your school, district, or organization focused and moving forward on family-school-community partnerships for children's learning. You are receiving this e-brief because of your involvement in a partnership-related event or initiative sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). **If you prefer NOT to receive this online newsletter, please reply to this email with the subject line: "Remove from list."**

Your comments, ideas, and stories are vital to this newsletter. Please tell us your achievements in promoting children's learning with families and community members, as well as your challenges and questions. Partnership practitioners learn most from each other, so **let's hear from you!**